October 24, 2000

2000 State Assessment Results Released

Student performance on the spring 2000 statewide assessments provides one of several measures of educational achievement across subject areas and across the cities and towns of our state. Since the passage of Article 31 in 1997, schools have looked to their state assessment results in reading, writing, mathematics, and health education to demonstrate their progress in bringing all students to high levels of academic proficiency. Student results under Article 31 are reported in terms of the percentage of students meeting or exceeding performance standards set by the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education.

The state continues its commitment to full participation on state assessments. The elementary grades are well represented. However, middle and high school student participation is of concern, especially for students who have not traditionally been included in statewide assessments. Each subject area assessment takes two to three class periods with reading, writing, and mathematics assessed at grades four, eight, and 10 (New Standards Reference Examination), and health education assessed at grades five and nine (RI Health Education Assessment). In addition, a state-developed writing assessment is given at grades three, seven, and 10. All assessments are aligned to statewide performance standards and place a premium on the ability to analyze and interpret what is read, apply math concepts and skills to solve problems related to real-life situations, and communicate effectively in writing.

The attached Table A contains three years of student performance results for the state as a whole, as well as the three-year average, called a rolling average. Rolling averages are computed by adding the number of students who meet or exceed standard in each of the three years and dividing by the total number of students who took the test in the three years. Schools are expected to use the first rolling average based on the first three years of test data as a "baseline" to demonstrate student progress against subsequent rolling averages. Many schools are undertaking a serious review of instructional methods and curriculum design in order to prepare students to meet the high standards reflected in the state assessments.

The current state assessments are deep rather than wide in total curriculum coverage of reading, mathematics, writing, or health education. This depth is considered an asset because the assessments are intended to measure understanding beyond superficial knowledge or factual recall within a limited amount of testing time. A consequence, however, is that it may take several different "forms" of the assessment used in different years to fairly represent the breadth of what students should learn. So far, Rhode Island students have been tested on two different forms, each covering selected parts of their curriculum. One also must take into consideration that each year a different cohort of students takes the test, also introducing potential variations. With these variables in mind, score changes of under 10 points should generally be treated with caution. Patterns of change over a

4-7 year period comparing rolling averages are recommended to establish firm conclusions.

According to Commissioner of Education Peter McWalters, "We now have the annual information system in place we've been working to create. With three years worth of data in assessment and survey results, and a variety of other indicators, we can now start to develop trend lines that will be meaningful. At the individual school level, where some schools have been working for many years on bringing their curriculum in line with standards, they are beginning to see results as reflected in some of their school-wide scores and local assessment data. At the state level, it is still too early to expect to see a strong rise in the statewide average. The trend is going in the right direction, however, and we are confident that we are on the right track."

Mary Ann Snider, interim director of assessment at the Department of Education agrees: "The statewide assessment results are more meaningful when you investigate school by school changes. The districts, schools, and teachers, whose first priority is improving teaching, not raising test scores, are beginning to see results. These gains are long lasting and reflect changes in instruction that prepare students for any type of assessment presented to them. This of course requires a long-term commitment to school reform."

Keeping the above cautions in mind, the following tentative conclusions are offered based on three years of state testing results:

<u>The Ability to Read</u>

- **Attention to reading instruction in the early grades is showing results. Reading scores at grade four are up from 1998 and performance levels are encouraging. Four out of five students (83 percent) are achieving the standard for basic understanding, and two out of three students (68 percent) are meeting the standard for analysis and interpretation of what they read.**

- **At grade eight reading comprehension remains unchanged from 1998 with slightly more than half of the students (56 percent) meeting the state standard. Analysis and interpretation has declined from 1998 with one-fourth (25 percent) of eighth-grade students meeting the standard.**

- **At grade 10 reading comprehension and analysis/interpretation both appear to be improving, but a third year of data is needed before considering any conclusion.**

<u>The Ability to Write</u>

The Rhode Island Writing Assessment and the New Standards English Language Arts Reference Examination both assess a student's ability to write better on topics that are provided. The RI Writing Assessment focuses on narrative at the third-grade

level, information at the seventh-grade level, and persuasion at the 10th- grade level, whereas New Standards includes a wider range of kinds of writing. The RI test takes place over two days, allowing time for editing and rewriting, while the New Standards takes place in a single testing period. For these reasons, the results on the RI Writing Assessment (Table B) and on the New Standards exam (Table A) cannot be compared directly.

- **Evidence of whether students are learning to write effectively is either positive or neutral. There are gains in performance from 1998 at grades four and seven. Of the remaining three grades tested, performance changes from 1998 are too small to draw a conclusion.**

- **Proficiency in the conventions of writing (grammar, spelling, etc.) is assessed at grades four, eight, and 10. Knowledge of conventions has declined at grade four since 1998. The apparent decline in the use of standard writing conventions at middle and high school would require additional data to confirm.**

Mathematical Proficiency

- **The state mathematics assessment provides performance measures for mathematics skills, understanding of mathematical concepts, and ability to do problem solving. It is encouraging that fourth graders have made some progress on all of these measures compared to the initial 1998 scores. Nevertheless, only one in five students (21 percent) is meeting the state standard for problem solving, indicating that there is still much work to be done in mathematics.**

- **Since 1998, eighth graders have shown improvement in math skills and problem solving although not in understanding math concepts. The ability to apply math concepts requires a true understanding of the mathematical principles involved so that students can work out solutions in nonstandard situations. Currently, only 20 percent of eighth-grade students meet this standard.**

- **At grade 10 mathematics performance has been discouragingly low with no real signs of improvement. About half of 10th graders (47 percent) meet the standard for mathematics skills, and less than one in four students meet the standard for understanding mathematical concepts or for problem solving (24 percent and 19 percent respectively).**

A Foundation for Healthy Living

- **Rhode Island has been a national leader in setting a priority on the assessment of health knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, performance measures at grades five and nine (Table C) show that only one in five students (21 percent) performs at or above the state standard on the health education assessments. Scores at grade**

five have been virtually unchanged since 1998. For ninth grade students performance on the health education assessment is lower than it was in 1998.

TABLE A: NEW STANDARDS REFERENCE EXAMINATIONS
READING, WRITING AND MATHEMATICS
Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding the State Performance Standard

GRADE 4

TEST DATE	READING		WRITING		MATHEMATICS		
	Basic Understanding	Analysis and Interpretation	Effectiveness	Conventions	Skills	Concepts	Problem Solving
Spring 98	71	50	36	45	57	20	13
Spring 99	84	68	43	48	60	29	23
Spring 00	83	68	56	34	62	28	21
3-Yr Avg	79	62	45	*42*	*60*	26	20
Participation Rate*	*97%*				*99%*		

GRADE 8

TEST DATE	READING		WRITING		MATHEMATICS		
	Basic Understanding	Analysis and Interpretation	Effectiveness	Conventions	Skills	Concepts	Problem Solving
Spring 98	57	38	63	61	51	26	20
Spring 99	52	23	44	53	62	21	30
Spring 00	56	25	56	54	61	20	29
3-Yr Avg	55	29	54	*56*	*58*	22	26
Participation Rate*	*91%*				*93%*		

GRADE 10

TEST DATE	READING		WRITING		MATHEMATICS		
	Basic Understanding	Analysis and Interpretation	Effectiveness	Conventions	Skills	Concepts	Problem Solving
Spring 98	NT	NT	NT	NT	67	22	17
Spring 99	33	18	16	77	43	24	17
Spring 00	43	40	28	72	47	24	19
3-Yr Avg	NA	NA	NA	*NA*	*53*	24	18
Participation Rate*	*85%*				*84%*		

- All scores are calculated from summary reports and could vary by one point due to rounding.
NT – not tested; NA – 3 year average not available.
* All students whose scores are reported here, as a percentage of those eligible to be tested at each grade.

Table B: RHODE ISLAND STATE WRITING ASSESSMENT

Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding the State Performance Standard

TEST DATE	*GRADE 3*	*GRADE 7*	*GRADE 10*
Spring 98	*14*	*18*	*42*
Spring 99	*24*	*31*	*39*
Spring 00	*20*	*31*	*46*
3-Yr Avg	**19**	**26**	**42**
Participation Rate*	**98%**	**96%**	**93%**

Table C: RHODE ISLAND HEALTH EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding the State Performance Standard

TEST DATE	*GRADE 5*	*GRADE 9*
Spring 98	*18*	*27*
Spring 99	*21*	*22*
Spring 00	*21*	*21*
3-Year Avg	**20**	**23**
Participation Rate*	**95%**	**86%**

<u>Envisioning a Society in Which ALL Students Are Well Educated</u>

A strong direction of federal, state, and local education policy is to provide the necessary instructional and student support systems to allow all students to share in the satisfaction and rewards of being well educated. Thus, it is not acceptable to alter achievement expectations based on gender, race, family income, native language, or disability. Schools are expected to monitor the performance of all students. Every well-educated student strengthens the community -- local and state. A state would be limiting its development of a strong economy and society by setting lower educational priorities for nearly half of its population based on low income, minority, or disability status.

Results from the spring 2000 assessments demonstrate that serious educational investments must be made for low-income and nonwhite students and for the nearly one in five students with some form of disability. The accompanying table, Table D, is representative of a more extended set of analyses and shows the strong impact of income, race, and disability on educational achievement at the present time.

There also appears to be an urgent issue related to the very low reading and writing skills of students whose native language is not English.

The state is responsible for providing information that identifies student performance gaps. The SALT system requires that schools examine equity gaps in student performance as they prepare for their SALT visits and in developing school improvement plans. In addition, the Department of Education, in partnership with the Children with Disabilities Study Group, is currently conducting a more in-depth analysis of participation rates and performance of children with disabilities. Schools must remain challenged to provide more effective ways of instruction and support so that ALL students have the essential foundation skills in reading, writing and mathematics and have the knowledge and skills needed to maintain a healthy life style.

Table D Representations of Performance Differences by Subgroup (Spring 2000)

Percent of Students Meeting or Exceeding the State Performance Standard

Student Group	Grade 4 Math[a]	Grade 7 Writing[b]	Grade 9 Health[c]	Grade 10 Reading[d]
Female	61	37	30	48
Male	64	25	12	31
White	69	36	25	44
Nonwhite or Hispanic	42	15	8	25
Low Family Income+	45	12	7	18
Children with Disabilities*	38	6	3	10
English as 2nd Lang(ESL)**	39	1	7	8
All Students	62	31	21	40

a – Mathematics Skills – New Standards Exam.
b – Rhode Island Writing Assessment
c – Rhode Island Health Education Assessment
d – Reading: Analysis & Interpretation – New Standards Exam.

+ Students approved to receive a free or reduced-price lunch.
* Includes children who receive special education and students who have "Section 504" accommodation plans.
** Reported are students who recently exited ESL or bilingual services (monitor status) or who are near to exiting special instruction (TESOL advanced status).

The reader will find attached spring 2000 performance scores for school districts (Table E). District and school data for prior years are available at www.infoworks.uri.edu. Current school results are available from the office of each district superintendent and will subsequently be compiled for the annual document Information Works!

TABLE E NEW STANDARDS REFERENCE EXAMINATIONS: READING, WRITING, AND MATHEMATICS SCHOOL DISTRICTS – SPRING 2000

PERCENT OF STUDENTS MEETING OR EXCEEDING THE STATE PERFORMANCE STANDARD

GRADE 4

DISTRICT	READING		WRITING		MATHEMATICS		
	Basic Understanding	Analysis & Interpretation	Effectiveness	Conventions	Skills	Concepts	Problem Solving
Barrington	93	80	75	61	84	52	39
Bristol Warren	78	65	55	36	62	26	19
Burrillville	82	67	50	38	76	31	20
Central Falls	71	45	37	18	32	7	4
Chariho	90	73	71	40	81	52	29
Coventry	87	71	65	40	66	27	21
Cranston	91	81	67	40	70	39	25
Cumberland	90	80	61	32	71	31	22
East Greenwich	93	86	70	50	82	49	38
East Providence	80	66	59	25	68	34	26
Exeter-W. Greenwich	87	74	56	28	55	26	18
Foster	83	74	80	40	80	41	35
Foster-Glocester	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Glocester	94	80	86	43	81	48	36
Jamestown	88	76	74	28	77	44	30
Johnston	86	71	67	20	63	24	19
Lincoln	86	77	72	26	70	34	24
Little Compton	95	84	70	70	79	16	25
Middletown	88	72	65	41	68	33	23
Narragansett	87	80	62	55	79	45	32
New Shoreham	88	88	65	71	84	39	39
Newport	76	56	37	19	49	17	22
North Kingstown	91	80	66	43	80	43	34
No. Providence	89	74	64	25	63	26	18
North Smithfield	92	78	63	31	76	35	28

Pawtucket	74	57	43	23	50	20	13
Portsmouth	91	79	57	42	69	33	30
Providence	68	46	38	23	39	9	7
Scituate	92	80	78	57	84	45	39
Smithfield	94	84	63	43	83	34	26
South Kingstown	91	79	53	48	73	43	35
Tiverton	88	75	67	55	79	36	34
Warwick	87	72	47	34	65	27	22
West Warwick	84	72	65	41	61	25	25
Westerly	91	78	61	20	72	32	29
Woonsocket	78	59	50	22	46	14	10
STATE	83	68	56	34	62	28	21

Dash (-) indicates that district does not include the grade reported. Scores are calculated from summary reports and could vary by one point due to rounding. All scores are from the New Standards Reference Examinations.

TABLE E NEW STANDARDS REFERENCE EXAMINATIONS:
READING, WRITING, AND MATHEMATICS
SCHOOL DISTRICTS – SPRING 2000

PERCENT OF STUDENTS MEETING OR EXCEEDING THE STATE PERFORMANCE STANDARD

GRADE 8

DISTRICT	READING		WRITING		MATHEMATICS		
	Basic Understanding	Analysis & Interpretation	Effectiveness	Conventions	Skills	Concepts	Problem Solving
Barrington	65	25	71	65	90	47	61
Bristol Warren	55	26	50	49	60	22	26
Burrillville	63	33	66	68	61	12	23
Central Falls	32	13	32	41	32	2	9
Chariho	64	36	65	61	72	37	45
Coventry	66	28	60	61	73	24	36
Cranston	66	36	61	63	67	24	32
Cumberland	70	38	56	61	72	26	37
East Greenwich	77	39	84	84	82	43	56
East Providence	46	19	47	48	65	20	27
Exeter-W. Greenwich	53	16	70	58	73	29	46
Foster	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Foster-Glocester	69	34	55	57	66	20	37
Glocester	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jamestown	78	38	44	41	86	40	63
Johnston	47	22	40	42	47	9	21
Lincoln	62	29	61	61	77	29	43
Little Compton	79	38	83	93	86	51	56
Middletown	66	35	52	48	65	20	28

Narragansett	80	37	65	59	79	42	44
New Shoreham	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Newport	60	25	59	58	64	17	26
North Kingstown	75	31	62	53	72	24	38
North Providence	53	24	54	61	56	12	19
North Smithfield	68	36	56	60	68	22	34
Pawtucket	40	14	39	42	42	6	12
Portsmouth	75	39	65	60	85	37	48
Providence	33	13	45	35	34	7	10
Scituate	81	50	79	58	82	27	45
Smithfield	72	33	70	75	75	17	36
South Kingstown	72	44	62	66	80	38	49
Tiverton	60	32	86	74	78	36	41
Warwick	51	19	64	55	61	16	26
West Warwick	51	24	54	45	66	27	29
Westerly	70	32	56	40	68	25	34
Woonsocket	33	7	41	37	48	6	13
STATE	56	25	56	54	61	20	29

Dash (-) indicates that district does not include the grade reported. Asterisk (*) indicates that percentages are not reported if based on fewer than 10 students. Scores are calculated from summary reports and could vary by one point due to rounding. All scores are from the New Standards Reference Examinations.

TABLE E NEW STANDARDS REFERENCE EXAMINATIONS:
READING, WRITING, AND MATHEMATICS
SCHOOL DISTRICTS – SPRING 2000

GRADE 10

DISTRICT	READING		WRITING		MATHEMATICS		
	Basic Understanding	Analysis & Interpretation	Effectiveness	Conventions	Skills	Concepts	Problem Solving
Barrington	75	74	56	72	65	45	41
Bristol Warren	55	52	36	65	38	20	16
Burrillville	43	41	21	68	58	29	25
Central Falls	32	25	10	41	12	4	3
Chariho	62	55	28	78	54	24	25
Coventry	56	50	37	72	60	27	24
Cranston	56	52	43	79	44	27	21
Cumberland	50	47	22	79	56	31	27
East Greenwich	65	64	57	88	69	54	42
East Providence	22	22	13	61	45	20	17
Exeter-W. Greenwich	53	52	34	72	61	26	20
Foster	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Foster-Glocester	54	51	38	85	61	41	35
Glocester	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Jamestown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Johnston	61	50	23	64	46	16	14
Lincoln	48	47	36	78	62	38	31
Little Compton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middletown	51	46	36	82	60	30	24
Narragansett	42	36	20	77	52	31	21
New Shoreham	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Newport	50	49	22	74	63	32	28
North Kingstown	52	51	33	81	49	29	22
North Providence	39	37	27	71	40	14	8
North Smithfield	58	53	41	82	67	35	24
Pawtucket	26	26	13	55	22	12	6
Portsmouth	40	38	30	71	58	34	28
Providence	28	24	15	58	32	12	9
Scituate	58	53	46	85	59	32	27
Smithfield	58	53	36	82	69	34	26
South Kingstown	46	42	31	73	53	40	27
Tiverton	39	36	34	79	44	22	18
Warwick	43	39	29	76	44	24	16
West Warwick	19	16	12	64	28	11	9
Westerly	50	44	37	83	48	24	19
Woonsocket	16	13	21	67	33	14	9
STATE	43	40	28	72	47	24	19

Dash (-) indicates that district does not include the grade reported. Asterisk (*) indicates that percentages are not reported if based on fewer than 10 students. Scores are calculated from summary reports and could vary by one point due to rounding. All scores are from the New Standards Reference Examinations.

This press release is available on the Department of Education Web site, www.ridoe.net, under News and Public Information.

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